

On the Application of

poor, the immensity of cruelty perpetrated on brute animals, and the general, national, desperate complacency manifested for what is named honourable war, during a whole half century of lofty Christian pretension — appeals substantially in vain. And why in vain ? If humanity were a powerful principle in the nature of the community, they would not, in contempt of knowledge, expostulation, and spectacles of misery, persist in the most enormous violations of it. Why in vain ? but plainly because there is not enough of that virtue of humanity, even in what is deemed a highly cultivated state of the human nature, to answer to the importunate call. Or if this be not the cause, let the idolaters of human divinity call, like the worshippers of Baal, in a louder voice. Their success is likely to be the same ; they will obtain no extraordinary exertion of power, though they cry from morning till the setting sun. And meanwhile the observer, who foresees their disappointment, would think himself warranted, but for the melancholy feeling that the nature in question is his own, to deride their expectations. You know that a multitude of exemplifications might be added. And the thought of so many great and interesting objects, concerning the welfare of the human economy, as a sober appreciation of means, seems to place beyond the reach of the moral revolutionist,* will often, if he has a genuine benevolence, make him sad. He will repeat to himself, "How easy it is to conceive these inestimable improvements, and how nobly they would exalt my species; but how to work them into the actual condition of man ! — Are there somewhere in possibility," he will ask, "intellectual and moral engines mighty enough to perform the great process ? Where in darkness is the sacred repository

subjoined, in qualification of the reproach relative to the next article—the condition of the poor—that during a later period there has been an increase of the attention and exertion directed to that condition; which has, nevertheless, become worse and worse.

* It is obvious that I am not supposing this moral revolutionist to be armed with any power but that of persuasion. If he were a monarch, and possessed virtue and talents equal to his power, the case would be materially different. Even then, he would accomplish but little compared with what he could imagine, and would desire; yet, to all human appearance, he might be the instrument of wonderfully changing the condition of society within Ms empire. If the soul of Alfred could return to the earth I—